



65 Hungerford Street  
Hartford, CT 06106  
860.549.1220  
860.549.5131 (fax)

**Testimony of Cheri Quickmire,  
Executive Director, Connecticut Common Cause  
To Government Administration and Elections Committee  
February 29, 2016**

Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, my name is Cheri Quickmire, and I am the Executive Director of Common Cause in Connecticut. Common Cause is a nonpartisan, non-profit citizens' lobby that has worked to improve the way Connecticut's government operates since 1971. Common Cause in Connecticut has a strong history of working to increase transparency in government and advocating for the removal of the corrosive influence of special interest money in government and politics. We have more than 7,500 members and activists in Connecticut.

**I am here to present testimony in opposition to Senate Joint Resolution 33, the Resolution** Petitioning the United States Congress to Convene an Article V Constitutional Convention to Overturn the United States Supreme Court's Decision in Citizens United V. Federal Election Commission.

**Common Cause in Connecticut strongly opposes an Article V Constitutional Convention, even as we strongly support a constitutional amendment to reverse Citizens United.** We oppose a constitutional convention because it is unclear that a convention could be limited to one subject, leaving too great a risk that it could be hijacked by wealthy special interests pushing a radical agenda that poses a very real threat to American democracy. A convention of states drafted our Constitution in 1787, including Article V as one of several mechanisms for future amendments. Article V itself has never been used but would be triggered once 34 state legislatures submit applications for a new constitutional convention; it then requires Congress to convene a new convention to draft and submit new constitutional amendments to the states for ratification. As of February of this year, five states have passed resolutions calling for an Article V Convention.<sup>i</sup>

There are three main reasons why a Constitutional Convention could not be controlled. The first is that the United States Constitution itself does not lay out any rules or even format for such a convention, leaving it completely unclear how the logistics of a convention would work. Secondly, there is no clear authority for ruling over a convention in any of the three branches of government. Finally, the convention itself could create its own ratification process, overruling current rule that the three fourths of states are needed to ratify an amendment. This leads to many questions

about how an Article V Convention would be run, how delegates would be chosen, if the convention could be limited to a single topic, or if our entire Constitution could be re-written. The late Justice Antonin Scalia opined recently that, “I certainly would not want a constitutional convention. Whoa! Who knows what would come out of it?”<sup>ii</sup>

Advocates of an Article V convention span the ideological spectrum, from those calling for an end to Citizens United, as this resolution does, to very conservative groups calling for a mandatory Federal balanced budget and an end to Federal taxes entirely. Common Cause is particularly concerned about the ability of special interests to manipulate the process. The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a corporate funded so-called “charity” that brings together conservative state legislators to push a radically conservative agenda, has been enormously influential in pushing for an Article V Convention. Although ALEC’s work to undermine workers’ rights, environmental protection, the Affordable Care Act, telecommunication regulations, and public education has been well documented, the group’s push for an Article V convention has largely escaped public notice.

In recent years, ALEC has endorsed several “model” bills calling for a constitutional convention to propose amendments that would require Congress to obtain approval from two-thirds of state legislatures before imposing new taxes, increasing the federal debt or federal spending, or issuing federal spending mandates. The Center for Media and Democracy, a watchdog nonprofit, reports that the Jeffersonian Project – ALEC’s 501(c)(4) advocacy arm – has been working “behind the scenes” to push the ALEC model Article V bills.<sup>iii</sup> Given how well funded ALEC is by its corporate members, it is likely that if the call for an Article V Convention were to be successful, it would spend vast amounts of money to influence the delegate selection process and then the convention itself. Late Chief Justice Warren Burger expressed concern that a “Constitutional Convention today would be a free-for-all for special interest groups.”<sup>iv</sup>

A free-for-all for special interests groups goes against the very grain of a government of, by and for the people. For more than forty years, Common Cause has worked to ensure that the voices of ordinary people can be heard by those in power. If an Article V Convention were to take place, these voices would almost certainly be drowned out by the deafening shouts of wealthy special interests that do not have the best interest of the people at heart.

---

<sup>i</sup> <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/barbara-hollingsworth/tennessee-becomes-5th-state-pass-resolution-calling-article-v>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/10/21/a-constitutional-convention-could-be-the-single-most-dangerous-way-to-fix-american-government/>

---

<sup>iii</sup> Center for Media and Democracy, “Exposed: The State Policy Network,” November 2013 <http://stinktanks.org/national/>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/10/21/a-constitutional-convention-could-be-the-single-most-dangerous-way-to-fix-american-government/>